

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Matt Dennis 202-225-6506

Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Nita Lowey

"Thank you, Chairwoman Granger. I want to express my appreciation for your hard work on this bill and that of your staff: Anne Marie Chotvacs, Craig Higgins, Alice Hogans, Susan Adams, Clelia Alvarado, Jamie Guinn, and Johnnie Kaberle; as well as my staff: Steve Marchese, Erin Kolodjeski, and Talia Dubovi.

"The agencies and programs funded by the bill we consider this morning make up only a tiny portion of our overall budget, yet they are critical to our national security, economic prosperity, and leadership in the world. The allocation that has been given to these important programs would result in cuts to foreign aid and diplomacy that will not solve our budget woes, but will substantially weaken America's standing in the world and hamper our nation's ability to protect and promote our interests overseas. When we weaken programs that foster stable societies, it costs us more in the long run in both treasure and, all too often, with the lives of our brave men and women in uniform.

"I appreciate efforts by Chairwoman Granger to include some of my top priorities. Aid to Israel, our important ally and a strong democracy in a volatile region of the world, is critical to our national security interests, and I am pleased that funding is included at the President's request level. I also support the continued conditions on aid to the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, and other countries in the region, which will help Congress maintain oversight of programs in some rapidly-changing situations, as well as language that maintains restrictions on Iran.

"Full funding for basic education programs included in the bill is critical to building strong, healthy societies. Education is the foundation for democratic leadership, and we reap the benefits of every dollar invested several times over through substantial improvements in health and economic development as well as decreases in violence.

"I am pleased that the funding levels for Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs, the Peace Corps, and the Broadcasting Board of Governors will continue to support our public diplomacy and diplomatic efforts by providing the opportunity for American voices to directly communicate our values and engage local populations.

"However, some of the cuts and policies included in this bill are extremely problematic. First, the lack of a working capital fund for USAID sets up the agency to fail. The importance of transparency, accountability, and oversight in our development work cannot be overstated. I cannot understand how the Majority expects USAID to fulfill the requirements contained in this bill – and in USAID's own policies – if we do not provide the resources to conduct the necessary oversight.

"At a time when we are doing everything we can to make every dollar count, it is confusing to see significant cuts to the multilateral development banks, institutions that are the most effective at leveraging their U.S. contributions. For example, U.S. contributions to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program are matched by more than 2 to 1 from other donors, allowing more than 7.5 million farmers to reap increased incomes and improved food security. The clean technology fund, which the bill zeros out, brings in between four and five dollars of additional investment for every one dollar the U.S. contributes.

"Finally, while it is certainly not a surprise, it is a constant disappointment that the Majority continues to target family planning programs for cuts and divisive policy riders. Evidence has shown time and again these programs lead to fewer unwanted pregnancies, fewer abortions, and fewer maternal and infant deaths. These are goals that, in theory, both parties in Congress share. It is therefore inexplicable that the Republican Majority continues to insist on provisions that are proven to undermine those goals.

"This bill would cut \$165 million from U.S. bilateral family planning programs and eliminate funding for the UN Population Fund, which will leave millions of women and families without access to contraceptives, prenatal care and screenings, education on birth spacing and healthy pregnancies, and other interventions aimed at improving maternal and child health. These cuts will also deeply impact UNFPA's programs to stop female genital mutilation, repair obstetric fistulas, fight child marriage, respond to gender-based violence, and provide emergency obstetric care. These cuts will lead to an alarming 8,000 maternal deaths, 40,000 additional orphans, and 1.4 million more abortions next year. Those numbers are simply appalling.

"Finally, the global gag rule – which would be unconstitutional in the United States – inserts a controversial policy into private and deeply personal conversations between a woman and her healthcare provider about legal health services. This policy has real-world implications as it forces healthcare providers to choose between accepting critical funding or providing honest care – and even referrals – to patients.

"Simply put, these policies and funding cuts are counterproductive and harmful; stopping conversations about abortions and reducing access to family planning options simply will not make abortions and unwanted pregnancies go away. I will offer amendments to strike these provisions in Full Committee.

"This bill is critical to our nation's security, and I hope we can work together to improve it as we move through the appropriations process."